

Seattle Office for Civil Rights

**Biannual
Report
2002-2003**



Enforcement

Education

Social Justice



Germaine W. Covington
Director

Director's Message

Transportation. Public safety. Economic development. Healthy communities. These are Mayor Greg Nickels' priorities for the City of Seattle. At first glance you might not see a place there for the work of the Seattle Office for Civil Rights. Where does fighting illegal discrimination fall among these key action areas?

But look a little closer. Arching over all these goals is the Mayor's commitment to Race Relations and Social Justice. The City of Seattle's Race Relations and Social Justice Initiative not only touches all the

City's business, but also every aspect of how the City conducts its business.

Race Relations and Social Justice means equitable treatment for neighborhoods affected by Seattle's tremendous mass transit projects. It means improving the relationship between police and communities of color. It means guaranteeing a fair share of public works contracts to women and minority-owned businesses. It means ensuring that City government welcomes and respects all Seattle's residents. And it defines

how and why we protect people from discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations and contracting.

Social justice lies at the heart of our vigorous enforcement of the City's anti-discrimination laws, and timely investigation of complaints. We continue to encourage negotiated settlements among parties to a charge, and we have refined our investigative procedures to settle cases more quickly.

When I look back over the last two years, I am very proud of SOCR's accomplishments. We developed public awareness about the dangers of predatory mortgage lending, and worked with businesses to prevent discrimination in the workplace. Our annual Seattle Human Rights Day attracted hundreds of people to celebrate the United Nations International Declaration of Human Rights. Our CityTalks program has brought hundreds of City employees together to discuss the effect of race on the workplace.

In 2004, Mayor Nickels asked the Office for Civil Rights to coordinate his Race and Social Justice Initiative, which will exert a far-reaching influence over City government and involve communities across Seattle.

Race Relations and Social Justice. The City of Seattle makes this promise: We will make this a City of equal treatment, a City of fair housing and open employment, a City for everyone.

1920s - 1940s

Restrictive covenants exclude people of African, Asian, and Jewish heritage from a number of Seattle's neighborhoods.

1942

2,000 of Seattle's Japanese Americans are interned.

1959

Claude Harris becomes the first African American firefighter in Seattle and in Washington State.

Enforcement and Training

The Seattle Office for Civil Rights enforces the City's anti-discrimination laws in housing, employment, public accommodations and contracting. When someone files a charge of illegal discrimination with SOCR, we conduct an unbiased investigation and issue a finding based on the evidence.

We try to work with all parties in a dispute to settle the case through negotiation. Negotiated settlements help clients on both sides of the table to find solutions to complex situations without assigning fault. They allow everyone to feel they have dealt with a difficult situation, and can move forward with their lives.

Most employment and housing cases filed with SOCR are also automatically filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) or U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Testing for discrimination

SOCR uses testing to increase compliance with fair housing laws, and to educate property managers about fair housing.

Fair housing tests employ paired actors in separate real-life situations to find out if typical Seattle renters experience discrimination because of their race, national origin or other protected class. SOCR contracts with independent organizations to conduct the tests and process the results.

- ◆ 2002-03: SOCR conducted 105 tests for rental housing discrimination among Seattle's Hispanic, Cambodian, Vietnamese and Middle Eastern immigrant communities.
- ◆ SOCR also conducted 50 rental housing tests based on race as a protected class (African American). The tests focused on neighborhoods where SOCR had conducted tests in 1999-2000.

Cases Closed in 2003 by Protected Class

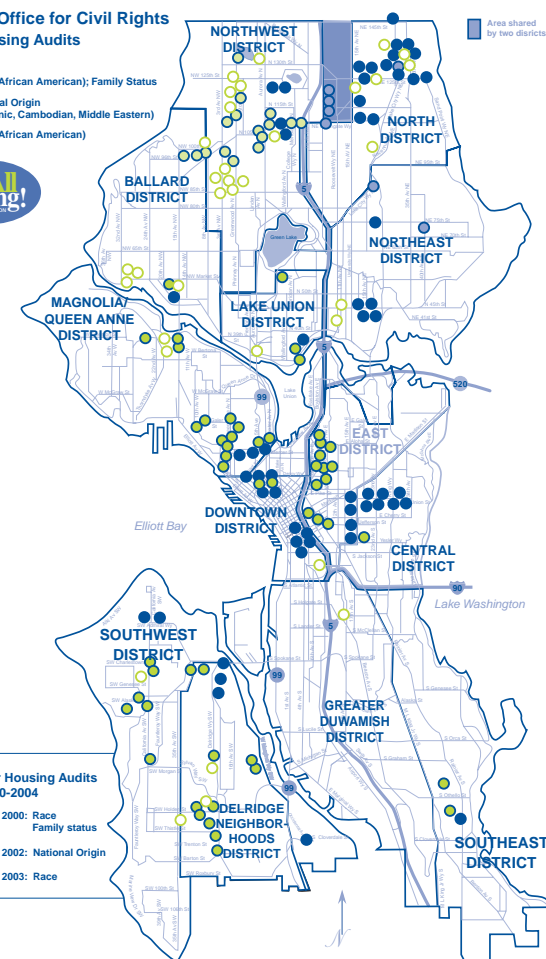
Race	78	39%
Disability	54	27%
Retaliation	32	16%
Sex	31	15%
National Origin	22	11%
Age	18	9%
Sexual Orientation	10	5%
Parental Status	6	3%
Section 8	5	2%
Use of Service Animal	4	2%
*All Others	9	4%

*Color, gender identity, marital status, political ideology and religion.

The total percentage is greater than 100% because some cases involve more than one protected class.

Seattle Office for Civil Rights Fair Housing Audits

2000: Race (African American); Family Status
2002: National Origin (Hispanic, Cambodian, Middle Eastern)
2003: Race (African American)



1961

35 members of the Central District Youth Club occupy the Mayor's Office for almost 24 hours to protest housing discrimination.

1963

The City of Seattle forms the Seattle Human Rights Commission. It's first task is to draft a fair housing ordinance.

1964

Citizens of Seattle defeat the Open Housing Ordinance by a vote of two to one.

1968

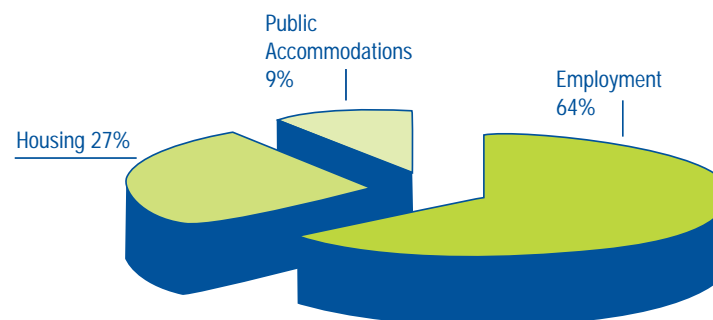
Seattle City Council unanimously passes Seattle's Fair Housing Ordinance.

Discrimination in mortgage lending

In 2002-03, SOCR expanded its anti-discrimination effort to include home buying and predatory lending. Fair housing laws cover all housing transactions, but enforcement traditionally has concentrated on the rental market. By drawing attention to illegal discrimination in home purchasing, SOCR joined the City's commitment to increasing Seattle's home ownership rate for people of color.

- ◆ 2003: SOCR coordinated and participated in a 2-day Investigators' Training in mortgage lending discrimination. Investigators from enforcement agencies across Washington State and from Alaska attended the event.
- ◆ 2003: SOCR processed 6 fair housing charges that involved mortgage lending issues, including allegations of predatory lending practices.

Cases Closed in 2003 by Type of Case



Improved case handling procedures

SOCR's case handling procedures produce rapid resolutions with low appeal rates.

- ◆ 2002-3: SOCR reduced the length of investigations to an average of 6 months or less.
- ◆ 2002-03: SOCR made frequent use of the Language Line and interpreters to conduct business with a growing number of non-English speaking clients.

Cases Closed by Type of Closure

No Cause	141	70%
Settlements	31	15%
*Administrative Closures	30	15%
Total	202	100%

*Administrative Closures can occur when a Charging Party withdraws a charge, when parties fail to cooperate with our investigation, or when we cannot locate the parties involved.

Dollar amount received by charging parties through SOCR's settlement negotiations

Employment/City Employment	\$16,954.62
Housing	\$8,195.00
Public Accommodations	\$300.00
Total	\$25,449.62

Note: SOCR and the City of Seattle receive no portion of these funds.

Cases Closed by Type of Case

Employment	129	64%
Housing	54	27%
Public Accommodations	19	9%
Total	202	100%

Social Justice

Our work does not end with enforcement of civil rights laws. The Seattle Office for Civil Rights challenges discrimination in all its forms.

- ◆ We make presentations throughout the year to organizations, community groups, small businesses, property managers and trade groups.
- ◆ We organize programs and activities such as CityTalks Dialogue on Race and Seattle Human Rights Day to combat institutional racism and to promote social justice.
- ◆ We staff three volunteer citizens' commissions that advise the Mayor, City Council and City departments on relevant issues.

Reaching Out to the Community

Fair housing outreach to immigrants

2002: SOCR created fair housing brochures and cards in six languages for 5 different fair housing agencies across Washington State - a total of 64,000 copies. We continue to work with our partner agencies to reach out to non-English speakers.

2002: SOCR helped produce videos that the Seattle Police Department used to strengthen its relations with ethnic communities.

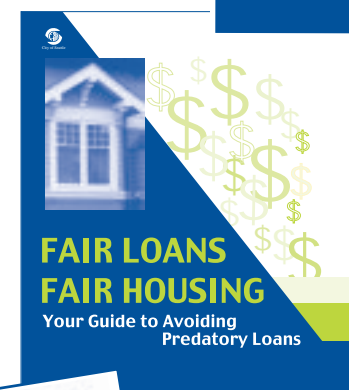
2002-03: SOCR staff members appeared in anti-discrimination public service advertisements that aired on local TV stations. SOCR also broadcast Spanish-language radio ads.

A leader in the fight against predatory lending

2002-03: SOCR developed training on predatory lending, and gave presentations to senior centers, churches, service organizations and City of Seattle employees.

April 2003: SOCR and the Office of Housing coordinated a Press Conference with Mayor Nickels to announce a Predatory Lending Public Awareness Campaign.

2003: SOCR produced *Fair Loans Fair Housing*, a consumer guide to avoiding predatory loans, plus the brochure, *Danger - Bad Loan Ahead!* These and other materials are available on SOCR's web site: www.seattle.gov/civilrights.



1971

The City establishes an Office for Women's Rights.

1973

Seattle outlaws discrimination in the workplace.

1980

The City adopts the Women and Minority Business Enterprise (WMBE) Ordinance.

Working with businesses to prevent discrimination

Employment discrimination represents nearly 2/3 of all cases filed with SOCR. In addition to investigating charges, we work to prevent illegal discrimination through education and training.

2002-03: SOCR developed training and materials on *Employing Non-Citizens*, and conducted more than 40 presentations to help small businesses navigate the confusing waters of U.S. employment and immigration law. Funding for this initiative came from the U.S. Department of Justice.

2003: SOCR developed training for employers to prevent workplace discrimination. Our new publication, *It's Good For Business*, highlighted specific concerns such as sexual harassment and disabilities in the workplace.



In 2003, Native author Sherman Alexie looked at human rights from a personal angle before a standing-room-only audience of 400+.



In 2002-03, SOCR met with nearly a dozen different international groups, from Kyrgyzstan to Ecuador.

Community Leadership

SOCR's special programs and projects highlight the City's role in promoting race and social justice throughout our community. Since 1999, SOCR's lunch-hour CityTalks Dialogue on Race has brought together City of Seattle employees to discuss race in the workplace. Our annual Human Rights Day adds a global perspective to human rights.



2003: SOCR's CityTalks inspired similar programs among King County employees and at Central Washington University.

2002-03: On December 10, SOCR hosted Seattle Human Rights Day to commemorate the signing of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

2002-03: Mayor Nickels joined SOCR and other City employees to march in the annual Pride Parade along Broadway.

2003: SOCR analyzed a Council policy proposal to add domestic violence victims to the list of the City's protected classes.

2003: SOCR worked with the Seattle Housing Authority to develop Race and Social Justice training for staff, Resident Councils and community volunteers.



City employees discussed race in the workplace as part of the CityTalks Dialogue on Race series.

Mayor Greg Nickels joined City employees in 2002-03 to march in the Seattle Gay Pride Parade.

Commissions

Seattle Human Rights Commission

Seattle Women's Commission

Seattle Commission for Sexual Minorities

2003: The Seattle Human Rights Commission held public forums on Hate Crimes and Disability Rights.

2002-03: The Seattle Women's Commission organized the first-ever Seattle Women's Summit in 2002. Hundreds of women assembled for daylong discussions of priority issues for women. SWC held a second Women's Summit in 2003.

2003: The Seattle Commission for Sexual Minorities convened a series of community dialogues on Race and the Sexual Minority Community.

We are always taking on fresh challenges, as well as developing new materials in English and other languages. To learn more about our work, contact us at 206-684-4500 (TTY 206-684-4503) or find us on the web at www.seattle.gov/civilrights.



1999

The City passes the Fair Contracting Practices Ordinance.

Protection under the law:

Sex (1972); sexual orientation and political ideology (1975); parental status and age (1979); use of a Section 8 Certificate (1989); gender identity (1999).

The City of Seattle's laws protect against discrimination in housing, employment, contracting and public accommodations based on:

Race	Marital status
Color	Parental status
Sex	Sexual orientation
Religion	Gender identity
Age	Use of Section 8 Certificate
Creed	Disability
Ancestry	Use of a service animal
Political ideology	Retaliation
National origin	



City of Seattle
Greg Nickels, Mayor

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Information can be made available
upon request to accommodate people
with disabilities and those who need
language translation assistance.

**We All
Belong!**
STOP DISCRIMINATION